

Town of North Hampton New Hampshire

North Hampton Dog Park Committee

Notice of Public Meeting

6:30 PM Thursday, July 16, 2020

Mary B. Herbert Conference Room; 233 Atlantic Avenue

& Google Meet

DRAFT

Call to order

Pat McLean called to order the meeting of the Dog Park Committee at 6:38 pm.

Attendees Physically Present: Pat Mclean, Michael Trotta

Attendees Virtually Present: Casey Dupuis, Paige Libbey, Amanda Jonovski, Anne Nettleton, John Dover, Ronni Martin, Alexa Haley, Meredith Vallee

Not Present: Jalisa Bush, Philip Thayer

Approval of minutes from 3/12/20:

Changes to minutes: Pat suggested revisions to the first paragraph of the minutes regarding the interim town administrator. Motion to approve the minutes as amended; made by John. Seconded by Michael. The committee unanimously agreed to approve. Pat will make the changes and email to Jan.

Agenda Items:

1. Land Update

Pat informed the committee that she had given an update on the Lovering Road parcel to Mike Tully, Town Administrator. She noted that the price has dropped by \$10,000. Mike Tully confirmed to Pat that the town is still unable to commit to funding a land purchase due to COVID 19 and budget concerns. Mike would like to wait for a later date to present it to the board. Pat thought that we had sent the property owner a letter. Paige said that it was another property on Lovering but that this property owner would have received the post card. Pat wondered if the committee should reach out to the seller or their realtor. Anne said she could make a phone call and find out if they would be willing to donate the property.

2. Strategic Planning/ Survey Results

Alexa, Casey and Paige put together a slide show to guide the strategic planning session.

Alexa gave an overview on the committee's background, mission and current state.

Casey gave a brief synopsis the survey results.

- 60% of respondents (135) were North Hampton residents.
- 224 total respondents.
- 82% were dog owners.
- 91% were in favor of a dog park.

- 84% were in favor of using town resources for the park.
- 68% would use the park weekly or more.

Casey outlined our communication resources. The most effective avenues based on the survey results seem to be social media and the quarterly library newsletter which gets mailed to all residents. Although these two were the most successful, all communication resources seem to be useful.

John made the point that the results may be skewed because a lot of the respondents were already supporters or would be users of the park. An example is that many of the respondents heard about the survey through social media or our email list, meaning they already follow us and support us. The committee discussed this and agreed. Pat stated that it is important to know of any issues/concerns in advance if the committee eventually needs the town to vote to support the park.

Paige ran through the land issue. There are 5 avenues the committee has defined for acquiring land.

Option 1: Acquire donated land – There are no willing donors with viable land to date. We have searched via advertisement, 2.5 years+ public outreach, and a postcard mailing to all vacant property owners in town.

Option 2: Use Town Owned property – There is currently no town-owned land available. We have searched via communication with the select board and conservation commission early in or process.

Option 3: Purchase Land – This is something we are starting to look into but will need to communicate with the select board going forward to determine when this could be a possibility (post COVID).

Option 4: Lease Land – This is something suggested in the survey results by a respondent. Specifically the property under the power lines which is otherwise unbuildable. There could also be other land lease opportunities we are unaware of.

Option 5: Merger with another local town for more land opportunities – another option suggested in the survey results by a respondent.

Pat said that option 3 would need to go before the board and they would decide on purchasing the land. We would have to present a specific parcel. She reiterated that Mike Tully said with COVID 19 and budget concerns the town will not be spending money on land at this time but that we could present it at a later date. That option will have to wait. She stated that we have considered option 4 in the past and have been against it due to the temporary nature of a lease. Paige stated that under the power lines could be different because it is otherwise unbuildable land and the powerlines have been there “forever” and will be there for the foreseeable future. There is an off leash dog park under the powerlines in Portsmouth while the Pierce Island park is closed to the public due to construction. Unitil typically holds easements over private property for their powerlines. That is the case in North Hampton where there are powerlines on Exeter Road, Lovering Road and North Road.

Pat said she could reach out to Mike to gain insight about options 4 or 5 (leasing land or merging

with another town).

Michael asked if we could revisit the community garden land. Pat reminded the committee of the reasons that option was abandoned in the first place and that it won't be possible. She also stated that the gardens may have expanded recently.

John said COVID 19 will be with us for a long time and the Lovering Road land could be at a low price as a result. He said that without the ability to purchase it now, we may miss the opportunity. The committee shared his disappointment.

Alexa suggested the Sagamore property on Lovering Road and grant writing to potentially purchase land. The committee discussed the Sagamore property. Pat thought a letter went to them but Paige stated that it did not but that they also should have received a postcard. The property was for some reason not listed in the assessor's database at the time letters were sent. Alexa will work on contacting them about that property.

Alexa brought up the concern of leasing land. She said if the town won't want to spend money to purchase land, they likely will also not want to pay for a lease. Paige said maybe they would let us use it free since its otherwise unbuildable, as long as we don't interfere with their maintenance. Michael and Paige will work together to reach out to Unitil.

Amanda offered to do some research on grant writing. Paige had sent Pat a list of available grants for parks in New Hampshire a while back. Pat offered to send this list to Amanda. Amanda asked what we were classified as for our 501c3 (a park?). Meredith said we were classified as "D99 Animal Related NEC".

Pat stated that before she reaches out to Mike Tully regarding Options 4 and 5, we will wait until we contact Unitil to find out about leasing land under their powerlines.

Paige wondered if the Lovering Road parcel has building issues and that's why it's been on the market for so long (since August 2019) with the price being lowered several times. If there are building or zoning issues, maybe it could be perfect for a dog park. Anne will try to get any information possible from the seller's agent but reminded us that the agent represents the seller.

Casey suggested a discussion with the select board on land purchase. Pat said they made it clear to her that they are not spending money at this time. Casey meant to discuss it with them now so that we know what the process for land acquisition would be in the future when funds become available so that we are prepared.

Alexa gave an overview of the events we attended in 2019 for public outreach and fundraising.

The events we attended were as follows: North Hampton Old Home Day, North Hampton Coffee with Seniors, Tick Talk (Cohosted with Library), NHBA Scarecrow Festival, Community Oven Fundraiser, Several Yappy Hours at Smuttynose and Throwback Brewery, Doggie Day at Scamman Farm, NHSPCA Paws Walk. Publications were included in Seacoast Bark and Community Newsletter

The committee discussed which events to continue doing and which to discontinue. The committee discussed the library events. They were not as well attended but definitely want to continue collaborating with them – potentially with something more interactive.

Paige stated the importance of continuing to be involved in town hosted events as well as the

business association.

The committee discussed fundraisers and events where we usually just show up for public awareness. We agreed we don't necessarily need to do that anymore, we have lots of public awareness at this point. But if we can go to events and sell T Shirts that would be worth our while. We discussed t-shirts and the potential for online sales. Amanda said there are websites where people can order t shirts online and they take a portion of the proceeds. That way we wouldn't have to pre-buy inventory or deal with shipping. We still have a lot of existing inventory of both shirts and bandanas.

Amanda said with COVID 19 a lot of events might be cancelled and suggested the possibility of a virtual fundraiser. The committee discussed some creative options to get people involved without having to host a physical event.

Anne suggested doing a calendar with pictures of dogs from town. Casey has experience with this. We could do a similar method of having a website do the production and shipping. Casey said she feels calendars are a dying industry and didn't think the efforts would be worth the return She thinks not everyone uses calendars anymore, especially with photos of other people's dogs.

Paige said Paypal has the option to sell products. We would need a website to do so. Casey will look into selling merchandise online.

Ronni suggested a Facebook fundraiser. Alexa said we have used the donate button previously and it hasn't been that successful. Paige said if it was more interactive it could work. She suggested an online auction. Alexa has heard of these being successful. Doing something like that would keep us relevant on social media as well as raise money. Casey discussed the virtual Paws Walk and "vendor mall".

Amanda suggested we register with Amazon smile so that people could choose us as their charity. The committee agreed. Paige made a motion to set it up. Ronni seconded. The committee voted unanimously. Amanda will work on this.

Alexa said any activities with kids work well. The craft idea for Scarecrow Festival was great. She suggested doing some type of contest for kids. Potentially an art contest with library?

Alexa suggested asking for donations at local dog businesses, like a round up your purchase. We have discussed this in the past. Casey brought up asking for donations at time of dog registration at the town hall. Pat will talk to Susan the town Clerk about it.

Casey brought up doing a dog wash post COVID. Paige suggested it as an old home day activity next summer, maybe in front of the police station or fire department since dogs are not allowed at the school. Everyone loved the idea. The committee will continue to brainstorm fundraising/ community outreach ideas for the next meeting.

Pat asked about Jalisa, it has been a while since anyone has heard from her. We should remove her from the committee list on the town hall website. There are also a couple of typos. Casey will reach out to Jan about both issues.

Motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:49 pm; made by John. Seconded by Amanda. The committee unanimously agreed to adjourn.

The Next Meeting Will be scheduled via Doodle Poll and will be posted.